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S E C R E T ROME 000296

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/27/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [IT](#) [UNSC](#) [IRAQI](#) [FREEDOM](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ: ITALY ON BOARD WITH EVOLVING MNF-I MISSION

REF: A. STATE 15400

[1](#)B. ROME 262

[1](#)C. USNATO 54

Classified By: Pol M/C Tom Countryman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 6.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary. Italian MFA officials are well-aware of and comfortable with proposals for the MNF-I to shift some emphasis to training and increasing the capacity of Iraqi Security Forces. Italy intends to maintain its current force level (and is encouraging others to do the same). However, our interlocutors also stress the continuing importance of the role of international organizations such as NATO, the EU, and the UN in Iraqi reconstruction and stabilization efforts. End summary.

[1](#)3. (C) Poloff conveyed reftel demarche to MFA Iraq Task Force officer Damiano Francovich and, separately, MFA NATO Office Director Giovanni Brauzzi on January 28. Both contacts said that it was "well-known" that the MNF-I intends to devote more of its efforts to training Iraqi security forces in the future (Francovich said the topic had come up in a recent phone call between NSA Hadley and his Italian counterpart, Giovanni Castellaneta). Francovich noted that the focus also should be on improving quality and not just quantity, since many of the personnel that have already undergone training are not ready operationally. He also said that the MNF-I training should be complementary to multinational efforts, such as the NATO Training Mission (NTM-I) and EU reconstruction efforts (both of which Italy is involved in). He noted that the EU, at its January 31 meeting in Brussels, would discuss a paper proposing specific areas where the EU could provide assistance, such as judicial training and criminal procedures (Ref B).

[1](#)4. (C) Both contacts reiterated Italy's commitment to staying in Iraq. (Comment. Despite much press speculation and calls by the opposition for troop withdrawal, the Italian government's official stance has not wavered. End comment.) Francovich said that Italy had recently demarched Ukraine on its announcement regarding a gradual troop withdrawal, but, due to President Yushchenko's recent inauguration, had not yet received a response.

Questions from the Italians

[1](#)5. (C) Brauzzi wanted to know where the UNSC fit into the process. Though he acknowledged that UNSC 1546 gave the MNF a mandate until completion of the political transition, he also noted that it called for a review of this mandate after one year. (Comment. Italian involvement in Iraq -- and any mission abroad -- is much more easily digested by the Italian public, and hence more easily justified by the government, when sanctioned by the UN or NATO. End comment.)

[1](#)6. (S) Brauzzi also asked that we share the report from General Luck's assessment trip to Iraq (in which two Italians also participated) and that we confirm that the February 22-23 MNF-I contributors' conference will be held in Bucharest (he thought it would be held in Poland). Action request: Please confirm conference locations and provide information on General Luck's trip that Post can share with the Italian government. Please also provide current US thinking on the need for a new UNSC on Iraq.

BAGHDAD MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

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2005ROME00296 - Classification: SECRET